

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING
PLANNING COMMISSION**

Wednesday, January 6, 2021

The West Reading Planning Commission met for their regular meeting on Wednesday, January 6, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. via a Zoom Meeting with the following persons present: Chair Philip Wert; Vice Chair Christopher Lincoln; Members Jennifer Bressler, Joseph Scoboria, Daniel Horman, Terry Siggins, and Cody Rhoads; Main Street Manager Mark Ratcliffe; Borough Manager Nicholas Imbesi; Code Department Manager Cathy Hoffman and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira. Maria Napoli and Christin Kelley were unable to attend.

Visitors: None

Mr. Wert called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m. and welcomed Cody Rhoads as the newest member of the Planning Commission.

Old Business

- a. **Five-Year Strategic Plan** – The Community Revitalization Foundation recently commissioned a comprehensive study to examine the future of the business district. One of the suggestions from Derck & Edson was to explore design standards. A decision would be needed on how to best implement design standards. Ideas such as amendments to the Zoning Ordinance, establishing a Historical Architectural Review Board (HARB), or developing a Form-Based Code were discussed. The noted desirable goals were uniformity of signage, architecture and aesthetics, similar to that of the 400 block of Penn Avenue.

It was suggested that members of the committee share locations where a common theme would be a desirable design for the business district and to share these locations with the Main Street Manager to allow him to obtain information as to how they implemented their design standards. Whitefish Montana, Bryn Mawr and Wellsboro Pennsylvania were three recommended locales.

Mr. Ratcliffe departed the meeting at 6:36 p.m.

New Business

- a. **Code Department Recommended Ordinance Revisions** – Mrs. Hoffman proposed the following ordinance amendments:
 - **Section 455-113 Lot area/width** – Recommended language revision was provided for this section of the Zoning Ordinance to further clarify that this supplemental regulation pertains to undeveloped lots. Committee members agreed to use this language while adding a definition of undeveloped lot. Mr. Wert also recommended adding a modern definition of convenience store to the Zoning Ordinance.
 - **Sign Lighting** – Mrs. Hoffman recommended excluding the use of neon signs with the exception of “Open” signage. The general use of rope lights and blinking lights within the business district were discussed. Mrs. Hoffman was requested to review regulations pertaining to lighting for further discussion next month.
 - **Sidewalk Café’s** – Mrs. Hoffman recommended placing the responsibility on business owners with sidewalk café permits to empty the public trash receptacles adjacent to their business in order to prevent overflow. The receptacles are currently emptied by the trash hauler every Tuesday and Friday, and the Public Works Department does address public receptacles that are overflowing during normal business hours. However, the overflow typically occurs during the weekend. The committee suggested an amendment to the sidewalk café ordinance that would require businesses to provide a trash receptacle.

- **Artificial Grass** – It was recommended to prohibit artificial grass placement in the planting strip and on private property. Due to available varieties of permeable artificial grasses, committee members requested recommendations to address the full replacement of natural grass.
- **Membership Clubs** – It was recommended to prohibit membership clubs within the Central Business District. Mrs. Hoffman was requested to research the Zoning District where this type of use would be an acceptable use.
- **Wireless Communication Facilities** – It was recommended to review these regulations to keep pace with new technologies. Due to the limited distance that a single facility provides coverage, consideration may be needed to allow multiple installations of the less noticeable antennas. Committee members preferred the collocation of facilities and recommended research of improved regulations while limiting the number of new pole installations.
- **Alcoholic Beverage Licenses** – It was recommended to discuss placing a cap on the number of liquor licenses allowed to operate within the Borough. Mr. Wert noted a formula that is used by the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board (PLCB) that restricts the number of licenses within a community based on the number of residents. The current number of liquor licenses within the Borough vastly exceeds this quota. A recommendation was made to converse with residents and business owners within the community to obtain their thoughts on this matter to avoid unforeseen issues in the future. Feedback will be requested during next month's meeting.

The list of fee structure modifications provided by Mrs. Hoffman will be discussed during the February meeting.

Adjournment

Motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 7:49 p.m. by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira
Borough Secretary